

AGENDA: March 25, 2003

4.15

CATEGORY: Consent

DEPT.: City Manager

TITLE: Position in Support of AB 218 (Simitian)—
Local Planning: Housing Elements

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a position in support of AB 218 (Simitian) relating to local Housing Elements.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact directly associated with support of AB 218 (Simitian).

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

AB 218, authored by Assembly member Joe Simitian, specifically legislates the following:

- Defines "housing unit" and "unit" for the purposes of Housing Element requirements.
- Declares the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation that would require the State Department of Housing and Community Development when evaluating whether a Housing Element is consistent with State law, to count congregate housing for seniors that is identified within the Housing Element of a city or county for the purposes of determining whether the city or county meets its share of regional housing needs.

AB 218 provides cities and counties with additional flexibility and incentives to meet the challenge of the State's housing needs. The bill allows cities and counties to include "congregate" housing when establishing compliance with State-mandated housing goals as contained in their Housing Elements. Congregate housing provides individual living areas with shared dining facilities and is a common choice for seniors. In high-cost living areas, congregate housing may offer a somewhat more affordable alternative for many individuals.

Although Mountain View does not currently have any congregate housing facilities, the Housing Element (Action 10.a) specifically encourages this type of development, and Mountain View may seek to develop congregate housing facilities in the future. Congregate housing is a choice for many seniors. These types of housing developments are very appealing to senior citizens across socioeconomic lines because they provide a more social environment with the added benefit of assistance with daily tasks, group meals and, if

necessary, medical attention. However, a strong disincentive currently exists that prevents many cities and counties from pursuing more of this type of housing.

Cities and counties are required to establish and work toward meeting State-mandated housing goals. Congregate housing, however, is not currently credited in meeting that goal. For this reason, there is little incentive to approve congregate units. If a city or county has a choice between approving a project that contributes to their State-mandated housing goal or one that does not, the current lack of legislation allowing congregate housing to meet State-mandated housing goals creates a disincentive to many cities.

Senior citizens are the State's fastest growing adult population group, and developers of senior housing report that over one-half of new congregate-care residents have moved from a home, condominium or apartment. Therefore, not only does congregate housing provide an option for seniors who cannot or chose not to live alone, it also opens up new housing units within the community. Congregate housing may also provide much-needed living space for individuals who are seeking affordable housing options within the community where they currently reside.

AB 218 recognizes that congregate housing is an important housing choice to have available in a community and allows it to count towards a city or county's housing goals.

CONCLUSION

If enacted, AB 218 would give the City of Mountain View the ability to meet its State-mandated housing goals contained in its recently adopted Housing Element through the future development of congregate housing facilities. As the percentage of the population who are considered to be senior citizens increases, the construction of congregate housing facilities is likely to increase. It is often more affordable, and the individual rooms with shared dining facilities better meet the physical, social and health needs of many seniors.

Both the Santa Clara County Cities Association (SCCCA) and the League of California Cities have adopted positions in support of AB 218. Other entities that have indicated to the author that they are likely to support the bill include: the City of Saratoga; California Rural Legal Assistance; the County of Santa Clara; and the originator, the Senior Legislator. According to the author, possible opposition may be voiced by the Department of Housing and Community Development. No independent analysis has been drafted by the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Staff recommends Council adopt a position in support of AB 218.

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PUBLIC NOTICING—Agenda posting.

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Attachment: 1. AB 218